

Albany. N.Y. First Presbyterian Church

Commemorative Discourses on the Occasion of the
Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Dedication of the
Present Edifice . . . 23 May, 1909.

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Commemorative Discourses

on the occasion of the

Twenty-fifth Anniversary

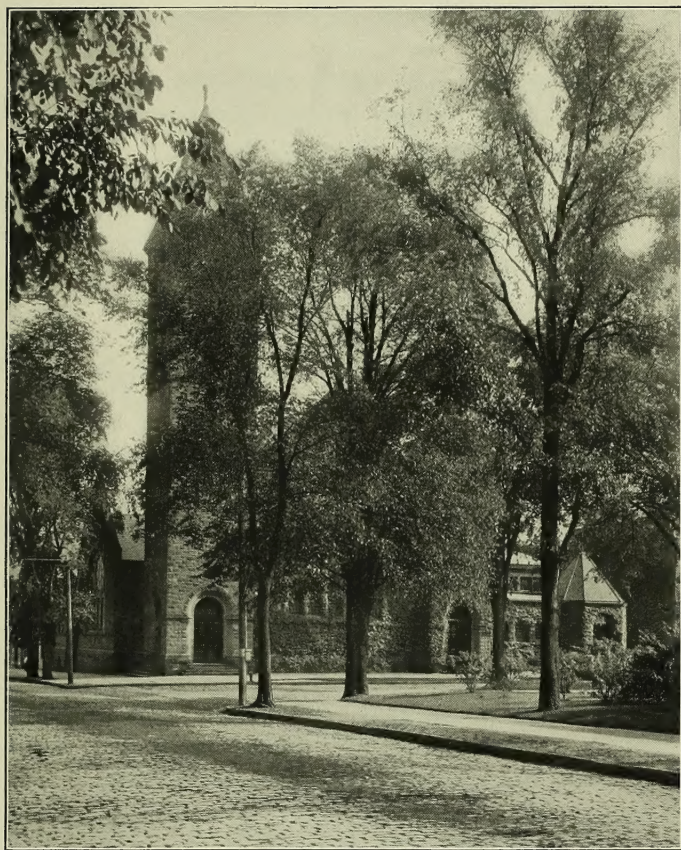
of the

Dedication of the Present Edifice

Corner State and Willett Streets

23 May 1909

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THE CHURCH

FOREWORD

When a church has lived nearly one hundred and fifty years its lesser anniversaries do not make great impressions. Yet a quarter-century should not pass unmarked.

It was in 1883-1884, during the pastorate of Rev. Walter D. Nicholas, that the present edifice—the fourth in the history of the organization—was erected. On March 16th of the latter year the first service was held in the chapel; on Easter Sunday, April 13th, the people gathered for their first hour of worship in the church, and on May 18th the building was dedicated to God. The morning sermon was given by Rev. Samuel A. Mutchmore, D. D., LL. D.; the evening by Rev. Henry Van Dyke, D. D., LL. D.

With the coming of this year of 1909, the Session believed it wise to mark, simply but sufficiently, the "Twenty-fifth Anniversary." In the chapel Tuesday evening, March 16th, Rev. Henry T. McEwen, D. D., of Amsterdam, spoke of "Prayer." In the same room, Friday evening, May 21st, Edward M. Cameron, Clerk of the Session, gave a brief account of the church as it was in 1884, and Rev. William Force Whitaker, D. D., of Elizabeth, N. J., Minister to this church for half the period in review, recounted many of the changes in the religious and other life of the land which these twenty-five years have witnessed. On Sunday morning, May 23rd, President Francis Brown, D. D., LL. D., of Union Theological Seminary, New York, preached on the theme, "The Church: a Light and a Voice." At the evening service Mr. Victor H. Paltsits, State Historian and one of our own members, told the story of "The Beginnings of Presbyterianism in Albany." These two addresses, at the request of the Session, by the kindness of their authors and through the co-operation of the Trustees, are herein presented as a memorial of the feast we kept.

Yet only through reading and remembering them will they yield to us their full values; the one inspiring us by its record of our forebears with their devoted fidelity, the other by its resonant call to the Church's high privilege and duty in these and coming days—a call not hushed until that land is reached where there shall be no temple.

WM. HERMAN HOPKINS, Minister.

September, 1909.

THE CHURCH : A LIGHT AND A VOICE

by

PRESIDENT FRANCIS BROWN, D. D., LL. D.,

Union Theological Seminary, New York

PHILIPPIANS—2:15, 16: "Among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."

Two figures,—the light and the voice,—each describing Christian power—shining, speaking,—something seen and heard, a beacon, a guide, an offer, a programme, a summons. The Church of Christ is that kind of a thing. Christ means it to be that. Christ himself is that. If his church is not that it is not really his Church.

This building in which we are, and which was offered to God twenty-five years ago, was built to be the home of a company of people trying to be just that—a light that shines, a voice that calls. That was the whole significance of the first dedication service. You did not build a club house, nor a museum, not a place to be luxurious in, and meet your well-dressed neighbors, not a place to store mummies in, or old stones. It was for a light-house, a muezzin's tower, a power-house, an armory, an arsenal, a hall of prophecy, a centre for bringing people to God,—the home of a living Church, living out Christ,—speaking out Christ,—to men. The significance of the dwelling is its fitness for the family. The church home has meaning from the quality of the church that inhabits it.

That is how this building came to be a house of God. Temples in the old sense, were houses of the gods because gods lived in them, and you had to come to them to find the god. But our God does not sit inactive inside

these walls the week through, waiting for us to come to him on Sunday. He is here, but not merely here. This house belongs to him, but so do all houses. He is here especially, because human hearts are here, and in these he dwells. God came in here with us. The beauty and quiet and worship of this place make it easier for us to listen to him. But the more familiar we are with him elsewhere, the more surely we shall find him here. Idle vanity will not find him here, till he makes his way into the vain and idle heart. Varnished worldliness will not find him here, till he breaks his way into its citadel in the soul. Selfishness, pride, lust will not find him here, nor carry his benediction with them when they leave. There is no magic in this place. This is a home built for a real church. A real, living church will meet its God here, having come up with him, and going out through these doors in his company.

Associations have gathered round the place. Weddings have brightened it, and funerals have solemnized it. You have come to associate it with praises and with prayers, with sacraments and with vital experiences of your souls. Many of you learned eternal things in it when you were children, as your children are beginning to learn them now. Its atmosphere is enriched with the memories of good men and women, with strong purposes, with quiet sacrifices, with patient bearing of burdens. These things interpret God to you in proportion to the response of your souls to God. He is as near you while you are buying and selling, or pleading, or healing, or sweeping and baking, or learning your school-book lessons, as he is under this roof; but the pressing associations of pulpit and pew, of word and of music, have the power to set the doors of our hearts ajar, like the pressure of unseen hands, so that God can find a straighter way in. And there is more of him here only as you are ready for more of him here.

It is always, and everywhere, **you** that he wants, and seeks and must have, to get his way. All this beauty and harmony befit his presence and praise, but it is not to the purpose, as from you, unless you give yourselves in it. This building is meaningless,—a deceitful sham, except as the proper home for a living church, that shines as a light in the world, that offers the word of life.

The significance had by this edifice for this quarter century—of course only a small segment of the long life of the organism that lives in it—can be measured in these terms only. It has been a fit gift to God to the degree in which the church living in it has known its power, and used its power.

Now I have not been asked to come here for a lecture on the history of a church. It is right that this should form part of your anniversary observance. But it is not **my** part. In fact, I think it is hardly safe to look back much on the past, unless you have the right view forward into the future. It is senile to live in the past. History shrivels us if we simply live on our history. Good history is magnificent, if we use our history as a momentum for the future. The opportunities of life are ahead of us, not behind. We do not get to the top of the hill by sitting down half way and looking toward the bottom we came from. We stop to take breath and enjoy the view, and know all the while that we have business ahead of us, yet. The real thing is that the church shall know its power, and use its power.

It is about this that I would like to speak for a little while.

1. To know its power a Christian church must know its God. Religious progress has been made through the ages by knowing God better. It is a knowledge that makes things move. God is the great force. To know him makes connection with the moving force of things, as the shoe presses on the electric rail. God is the same, always, but knowledge of him has not been

the same always. Niagara does not change much, day by day, but it is one thing to hear its roar in the dark, and another thing to catch a glimpse of it by a lightning flash, and still another thing to see it on a sparkling June morning, with the glint of the sunshine on every bead of it, and watch the majestic, smooth, thundering flow of its water as it drops into the abyss. God does not change, but men know him better. His unknown changelessness is not like a statue's, immovable behind a veil. He has always gone about his work among men, while films on human eyes have prevented their seeing him. And how slowly the film has been absorbed and the dimness cleared away! Men have thought they saw hundreds of him, when he was only one. They have thought that he was just mightier than they, and therefore awful, and they were afraid of him. Then when they found that he was kind, and was protecting them, they thought he was merely a great fighter—for they were used to protect themselves by fighting. Then they began to see that he was righteous, and that the conscience in their breasts echoed him. And they saw that he was wise, planning for the world. And they perceived that no other purpose had a chance, in rivalry with his. And so it went on until Jesus came, and let men see the heart of God. And what sits at the heart of God? Not terrifying strength, for here was a man who grew tired and hungry and could die, and yet God was in him. Not the dash of the soldier, for he surrendered and refused to fight, and let them kill him, and prayed for his murderers; and yet God was in him. Not the sternness of rigid morals, though this man's life was spotless, for sinful people felt drawn to him, and he spoke gently to them, and held them in his company, and yet God was in him. Not wisdom, even, though he could read men's hearts with sympathetic insight, for there was a day and an hour that he did not know, and yet God was in him. Those high qualities which men

had seen in God before him did not vanish out of God, but none of them was the central, commanding thing in God. God could not show himself in a man by these things. At the heart of Jesus was the burning purpose to give himself to men—and that expressed the heart of God. Jesus made it plain that if God was strong, it was most of all strength of loving desire; that if God was kind, it was most of all the will to implant his kindness in human souls; that if he was righteous, it was most of all to teach men how to live in righteousness together, and with him; that if his was a controlling mind, it was a mind planning no aggrandizement for himself, but a royal heritage of noble life for his men and women. God was seeking, first and last and always, not to gather up all things to enrich himself, but to give all things, and himself too, to the people whom he loved more than he did himself. If God was in Jesus, this is what God is at the heart of him, for this is what Jesus was, and so Jesus lived.

Men have long believed in God and in Jesus Christ, and souls of beauty have been nurtured by this faith, and lives of devotion lived. But the church at large is only just opening its eyes widely to the God who lived in Jesus. We are now daring to believe that God is as simple and tender and great in self-sacrifice as Jesus showed himself to be. Let me beg you to make this epoch in the condition of your church life the beginning of a new era by the simple conviction that when you see the life of Jesus you see, without quibble or reserve, the very centre and heart of the energies of God.

2—To know its power, the Christian Church must know its God as Jesus shows him. To use its power, the Christian Church must be one with its God. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," Paul said. God must not be a spectacle to you, which you admire. He must be a life to you, which throbs in your pulses. Everyone who is ready to share this life of God

belongs in the Church. The real church, the church whose members God sees to be his in spirit, are those who are united to him by taking over into their being his love and his purpose and the consecration of Jesus Christ to ends outside himself. For every such child of God the church of God must have a welcome. At bottom the one important question to put to each applicant is this: Do you know Jesus Christ, and do you find your God in Jesus Christ? Is there anything better than Jesus Christ? Is your best thing—the motive that thrills you, the wish you will die for—in Jesus Christ? Then you are in his real church already, and any human device that prevents the church of men from recognizing you is a grave impertinence toward God. Long-drawn creeds are not in place for this purpose. Elaborate doctrines of the schoolmen do not determine men's relation to God. No church may dare to reject what God accepts, nor presume to accept what God rejects. I am not belittling theology; I am saying that a knowledge of what God is, is the great theology. It is the profoundest theology, that God is of a kind that does not ask first what theories men hold, but what life they desire to live;—that selfishness is worse than doubt whether Jesus had the substance of God; that the man who makes his profit out of little children whose stunted bodies and shrivelled minds are the price of their toil in his factories is the real atheist, however piously he bows his head, or however large his contribution to the expenses of the church; that not even sorrow over past sins, and placid joy in having Jesus as one's Redeemer, guarantees religion, without the purpose of service in Jesus' name.

This is a great theology. It shifts the emphasis, and sets it where it belongs. No doubt it is a telling question, whether Jesus incarnates the life of God. But it is a yet deeper question what kind of a God is it that Jesus incarnates? If you get at the real God through Jesus, it makes far less matter what you call the relation between

Jesus and God, than if you call Jesus God, and think of God as a pagan might think of him—as arbitrary power, or cold justice, or self-centred majesty, or a sharp inquisitor, or anything else than the kind of a person Jesus was. Men have sometimes thought their God dwelt in a stone, or a tree, or a crocodile, or an autocrat on a human throne. If your God can find room in any of these, as well as in a man like Jesus, then it makes no difference which of them he lives in, or whether he lives in any. The great thing is to have a God who could find no visible home except in a perfect man ready to die to save other men, like Jesus Christ.

The arch-heretic is not the man who doubts whether the Bible has all its dates right, or all its authors correctly named, or even whether all its opinions are eternal verities; nor is he the man who hesitates to express the divinity of Christ in terms of ancient metaphysics—but the man whose God is controlled by another spirit than that of love and sacrifice which Jesus Christ shows men. Once believe that God is simply like Jesus—lives in Jesus, except for the limitations of a man, and you believe all you need to believe about Jesus' Incarnation of God.

A church with that belief is ready to preach the Gospel to the world. And till it gets that belief, it has no gospel, which, in the long run, is worth the preaching.

3—For the Church lives, in proportion as it sets forth its God. What makes the church like God is forgetting itself in its opportunity. The church does not exist for the salvation of its members. It is not an ark of safety. It exists for rescue. It is a life-boat. It is not a conservative force, to keep things as they are. It is a revolutionary force, to change things radically. It will disturb society and not soothe it, until society grows God like. It does not exist for the sake of its services of worship. These exist for the sake of its larger mission. Eloquence is good in its pulpit, if it makes entrance into

human hearts for the spirit of Jesus Christ. Music is good from its organ and its choir, and the united voices of its congregation, if it expresses real thankfulness and praise, and sends people out with uplift and heartier intent to serve. Pictures would be good if they touched the soul with finer reverence, and made the divine more actively real. These things have often come between the soul and God—like non-conducting blankets, instead of connecting wires. It need not be so. The arts are of God, and have power for ministry. But it will always be so, unless the life of the Church is mastered and moulded by the sacrificial life of God.

To go to church is a good habit, but in itself it is not piety. The doctor who drives ten miles away from church, wholly absorbed in the thought that he must bring back a needed life from the edge of the grave, worships more truly than the man who is religious here, and never makes you think of Jesus Christ through the week, or the woman who feels more at home with her calling list than with her God and the needs of his world.

I do not mean that God is censorious about these lesser things. He does not ask us to live always on mountain-peaks and breathe rarified air only. The church is a place to rest in, a place for gathering of mind and quietness, away from the distractions of the world, a place for penitence and forgiveness and relief from burdens of many kinds, a place to help us do better the small things of every day. Do not grudge its standing open on week days and all day long, in case some wandering child should stray into it, and find tonic in one breath of the atmosphere of heaven. Do not make it something apart from the common interests of life. Let it be not a strange, but a familiar thing, and feel it no descent to pass from it to the ordinary demands of human fellowship, in your family or in the town. But try to learn the lesson of God in Jesus, by means of it, so that all its manifestations shall help you to live more simply and generously, like him.

4—So the Church is to bring the life of God into human affairs. It is a daring programme. It deals with the very roots of things. We are not going to transform life by raking the dead leaves off its surface, or even by pulling up a few ugly weeds. We have got to turn up the soil, by deep ploughing, and sow much new seed, and tend crops for the harvesting which hitherto have been strange.

Take your own personal life. What is its commanding purpose? how far does it reach? What is the pivot on which it turns? Are you after things for yourself? Are you thinking how you shall get on? I mean, is that the ultimate thing you are working and pushing for? How much of your time, and hearty wish do you give to things for another reason than that you like them, or that they benefit you? Do you find yourself shutting your eyes to some suffering link in the human chain by which your comforts are passed along to you, through fear that your comforts would be lessened if you took account of that distant human agony? Do you ever condone wrong-doing, because to denounce it would expose you to sacrifice? Are you bearing anybody's burdens? And if not, why not? Is it because you do not believe that Jesus did so? Or because you are not ready to make Jesus' life yours? And what contribution are you then making to the Christianity of the Church?

Again, do not hear censoriousness in these questions. I know I am speaking to women and men who are leading the life of Christ, and are longing to follow closer in his steps. And just that simple thing is the need of all the world.

These honest searchings lead one soon out of one's own life into the community. I push, you say, because I must—everybody pushes—I shall be crushed and trampled if I do not shoulder my way through.—Ah! then you see the programme widens, grows more audacious. Is rivalry the principle of our social life, and does the common rivalry make my life so hateful and selfish?

Then some other principle must be put in the place of rivalry—then love must somehow supplant competition as the driving power of men. Or does the push and scramble suggest Jesus Christ, and does God live by pulling down rivals? Or are we to abandon the Gospel, and live by greed?

There are some businesses that thrive by tempting and some that thrive by over-reaching. Is the church, then, to let these wrongs alone? Do you know how cruelly some men and groups of men in commerce and in politics crush their opponents, and how scandalously they buy their way? And has the church no word for this? Do not blame me for referring to affairs I do not understand. You understand them; there are those here who are men of affairs, and you know whether the spirit of Christ presides over affairs. And if not, are you going to be dumb and still claim to be Christian?

Do you see how tyrannically labor unions sometimes dictate to their members—leaving them no choice between exorbitant demands and starvation? Will you maintain the freedom of manhood, vindicated by Jesus, and still keep patient sympathy with men whom years of wrong have hammered into relentlessness? For is not that the loving justice of God our Father?

Do you know whether most public servants are high-minded, and regard their office as a sacred duty? And do you care? And will you take on burdens, and show that you care? And if not, why not? How will you pray, in honesty, for the reign of God among men?

Do you consider how cramped the lives of the world's rough workers are, how joyless—with how few relieving and re-creating influences of uplifting power? The church must learn the lesson of sympathy and zeal for betterment of social conditions. Social Settlements are pointing the way. We must sympathize without criticizing too much, be prepared for ingratitude, work not for gratitude, but for amelioration—forget ourselves in bringing the life of Christ to men. Whatever makes

the church a supply for any human need is a bond between God and men. Persuade men that the church really cares—as Jesus cared—and they will begin to face the church expectantly, and get a glimmer, through its windows, of the hope of God.

Will you side with the family and seek to consecrate it? Will you make law good and teach respect for it? Will you reform amusements, trying to make them clean? Will you fight rampant and cruel sin, till it is conquered? There is a martial note in Christ's religion. It is no mild and helpless thing. There are heights to be scaled. There are intrenched evils to be subdued and destroyed.

We can thus even see how love is brought to the use of force. God showed himself simply as strong, when men could understand strength better than anything more delicate, and yielded only to superior force. And, now, and always, force is legitimate to keep selfishness from thwarting love. Policemen attest the ungodlikeness of the world, but the police serve the divine benevolence—for evil that will not yield must be restrained, for the sake of all. Good people dream of universal peace, but there will yet be armies needed to establish peace. For the thoughts of men are not all thoughts of peace, and some must fight, that the turbulent do not destroy the peace of the world, or the oppressor destroy the peaceable liberties of men. If you see a scoundrel attack a woman, you will strike him down, if you have manhood in you, and do God service. But nations, or men, who fight for simple greed, deny their Lord.

I illustrate only. No one can describe in full. For the essence of the thing is that the life of God in men moves by its own laws—works itself out. We want a church full of the living God—not tying itself by rules, but making way for the freedom and the efficiency of love—composed of men moved by the inward spirit, free to live and free to suffer and to die—like Jesus, for the life of the world.

Above all things, you must pass on the spirit of Jesus, which inspires you, to the people you teach. Help him to live in them. This is the path to the redeemed world. This means missionaries and all the engines of rescue. It means the forgiveness of sins. It means creating heavenly ideals, and getting them realized on earth. It means convincing men that to be Christian is not to escape a future hell, or even to be relieved of stress and pain of mind, but to be like Jesus Christ, sharing his stress and pain, to save the world to him. When all men are like Jesus Christ, the work will be done.

This is the way to re-dedicate the Church to God. Make it an expression of thankful joy in his service, and a means for entering the fellowship of his redemptive work. No other dedication of it, without this, is worth the paper your calendar is printed on. We can make this a real offering to God, only when we, in very truth, offer ourselves with it.

Men and women—this is a good day to observe because it is such a serious day. It is, no doubt, a time for thankfulness, but it is not a time for cheap congratulation or smug, self-satisfied retrospect. You are glad you have this church and are going to live in it still longer. Do your present purposes give you the right to be glad? The Lord has led you hitherto, but unto what? For what? Not that you sit down to enjoy your ease. Not that you feel superior to any church neighbors. Not that you rest back on your cushions and watch God save his world. If that were the end of it, you might better pull down the church to-morrow, and build its stones into a warehouse, or let the river's current bear its timbers off. It would be better to meet under the open sky, and shiver in the biting winds, as devoted ones have met before now, to have the Unseen gripping your lives and moulding them—to have your torch really lighted from above—to feel your fingers holding the gift of life, that you might securely pass it on.

I pray that you, as a church, may learn the lesson of God in Jesus Christ. I pray that the enthusiasm for people may possess you, showing itself as the practical side of enthusiasm for God. I pray that the mind may be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

You are a light in the world. Let the light burn clear. You have the word of life to offer—it can be fully offered only by living it. Make this church a joy and a renovating power by giving Christ his way in it. Think what it will mean in the city, if you understand his terms of life, and live accordingly. It rests with you to convince men that there is something real, and tremendous, and splendid in God.

Let this be a spot where God is taken in earnest, where the simplicity of obedience has command, and the passion of loyalty. Christ will revolutionize the world before he gets through—help him to revolutionize this city. Have great brotherhood with all who are working toward this end. Gather here to make report to him, and take orders from him—each assigned to his task. Make the life of Jesus Christ your real business. Carry it from this place into any other business you may have. Believe in Jesus. Believe in God. Let him work his will in you and by you. Let him find here one corner where his kingdom can come, and his will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.

THE BEGINNINGS OF PRESBYTERIANISM IN ALBANY

by

VICTOR HUGO PALTSITS

State Historian

There are those who idly pluck the luscious fruit but never think of the roots from whence the sap has sprung. To trace the beginnings of Presbyterianism in Albany, we must go back some decades to that radical pietistic movement in Connecticut known as the "Great Awakening" of 1740-1741, which produced radical diversities of view as to methods of Christian evangelization in many members of the New England Congregational Church. The operation of the Saybrook platform of church government favored an increase of sympathy of the Connecticut churches for the Presbyterians of the Middle Provinces, and diminished their sympathy with their conservative brethren of Massachusetts. There was a widespread fear of the establishment of Episcopacy in the colonies and the erection of an English bishopric. Just before the revolutionary war this feeling of fear and sympathy led to co-operant meetings between the Presbyterian Synod of New York and Philadelphia and the Associations of Connecticut. The main object of these efforts was to resist encroachments from the Established English church and to promote evangelization in the newer settlements. This body met annually from 1766 to 1775.¹

A schism in in the American Presbyterian church caused a division from 1741 to 1758, affected indirectly by the "Great Awakening" of New England, with which William Tennent and his group of followers were

¹Walker. *Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*, pp. 514, 525, 526. See also Smucker. *The Great Awakening*, in Proc. of American Antiquarian Society, 1874.

severely afflicted. In those days men were known as "New Side" and "Old Side" Presbyterians. After considerable effort a reunion was brought about in 1758. On this basis the reunited church entered upon a new period of activity. The stricter view of Presbyterianism had prevailed over the looser in matters of church order. The newer view had prevailed over the older in that of the perspective of doctrine and its practical application."¹ The plan of union consummated on May 22, 1758, brought together the Presbyterian Synods of New York and Philadelphia. In 1759 its strength was greater than that of all the other Christian denominations combined, in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The Dutch Reformed Church stood second, and mostly held the Presbyterian type of polity.²

The Synod of New York and Philadelphia operated southward, westward and northward—in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and the Carolinas.³ The materials for the beginnings of Presbyterianism are scant for the region lying north of New York City and between the Hudson and the New England border. But investigation in this region is important in this inquiry, because Albanian Presbyterians were early affiliated with the Dutchess County Presbytery. The Presbyterianism of Dutchess and Putnam Counties has been traced to a Milford, Connecticut, origin. The Milford separatists were "New Side" seceders from Congregationalism in 1741. It is believed that some of them came over into New York, about 1742, to the present Putnam County. Their first pastor was Rev. Elisha Kent, a graduate of Yale College, and grandfather of the eminent Chancellor Kent of New York. These early seceders, while leaning toward Presbyterianism, had no connection with a presbytery, but were virtually independents. Within a few years after the

¹Thompson. *History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States*, pp. 34-44.

²Briggs. *American Presbyterianism*, pp. 316-317.

³Briggs. p. 330.

"Great Awakening" over thirty of these separatist churches were organized in Connecticut, and others were formed in Western Massachusetts and Vermont. What more natural than that they should push westward over their boundaries? On October 27, 1762, three ministers, Elisha Kent of the First church of Philips precinct, Joseph Peck of the second church, and Solomon Mead of South Salem, consulted about forming a presbytery, "which they did by prayer, and the adoption of the Confession of Faith, and Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and applied to the Synod of New York and Philadelphia to be received." Their request was granted, and the Synod added to their number John Smith and Chauncey Graham from the New York Presbytery, and Samuel Sacket and Eliphalet Ball of the Suffolk Presbytery. They were named, on May 23, 1763, the Dutchess County Presbytery, and on June 28 of that year held their first meeting, when they adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and engaged "to observe the Directory for worship and government."¹

During the last French and Indian war many New Englanders attached to provincial regiments passed through Albany to join expeditions to the westward, along Lake George and Lake Champlain, or to participate in the campaigns against Quebec and Montreal. The familiarity gained in this way of the place, reinforced by the growing *Wanderlust* and theological difficulties—all favored emigration westward. Quebec and Montreal were captured. Preparations for peace were in the air. "In 1760, North of Ireland and Scotch people, who were engaged in mercantile trade, came to Albany in goodly numbers. This fact secured the attention of Scottish people generally toward the section of country adjacent

¹*Early Presbyterianism on the East Line of the Hudson. Letter of Rev. John Johnston, D. D., in American Presby. Review, 1868; Gillett. History of Presby. Church in U. S., vol. 1, pp. 145-147; Briggs, p. 330.*

to Albany."¹ In 1758 there were ninety-four ministers of the Presbyterian church in the original colonies of the Atlantic seaboard, of whom forty had come either from Ireland or Scotland. Just as the denomination was indebted to Ireland and Scotland for its clergy, it owed its increasing strength in membership.² The two elements of which we have spoken—New Englanders and Scotch-Irish—began to fuse in Albany. The language of the Reformed Dutch Church they could not understand; the Lutherans afforded even less of opportunity to them for church affiliation. Presbyterianism, in other places, was combining divergent national types—as English, Scotch, Irish, Welsh, Dutch, German, French and Swiss.³

On May 26, 1760, the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, having received "a very pressing application" for supplies from "the English Presbyterian gentlemen of Albany," appointed Hector Alison of Drawyers, Delaware, "to supply there till the second Sabbath of July, if it suits his conveniency," and Abraham Kettletas, then on the verge of resigning his charge at Elizabethtown, N. J., to supply there four Sabbaths, beginning with the fourth Sunday of July. Synod provided, moreover, that William Tennent should "supply them afterwards, as he can conveniently."⁴ This William Tennent, the younger, was the well-known patriot pastor at Freehold, N. J., in the American Revolution.

The next steps to formation were organization, the call of a minister and the erection of a house of worship. Application was made repeatedly to Synod to secure aid. "Their case was recommended to the attention and charity of friends of the cause."⁵ Through great embarrassments success was attained. Sometime in 1762, William Hanna was called to be their first regular

¹McClure. *History of the Presby. Church at New Scotland, N. Y.*, p. 10.

²Craighead. *Scotch and Irish Seeds in American Soil*, pp. 297-298.

³Briggs, p. 343.

⁴*Records of the Presby. Church, 1706-1788*, p. 302; Gillett, vol. 1, p. 386.

⁵Gillett, vol. 1, p. 154; *Presbyterian Magazine*, 1851, pp. 129-131.

pastor, and during his pastorate the first house of worship was erected. Mr. Hanna was an educated man. He had studied Greek and Latin and taught the latter at the Rev. Samuel Finley's academy at Nottingham, Maryland; he had assisted the Rev. Dr. Robert Smith for more than a year at his school in Pequea, Pennsylvania, as a tutor of Greek and Latin, and then entered the College of New Jersey, at Princeton, where he "had passed one Examination for a Degree with the Approbation of the Trustees & would have been admitted to the Honours of the College had he attended at the Commencement last" [i. e. 1758]. In 1759, he received his degree of A. B. from Kings College (now Columbia University). From that institution he also received the honorary degree of M. A. in 1765, and the same degree was conferred on him by Yale College in 1768. Hanna was, in 1760, a communicant of the church at Salisbury, Connecticut, of which Jonathan Lee was then pastor. On May 28, 1760, the Litchfield County Association after due examination, gave Hanna a license "to Preach the Gospel Under the Conduct & Direction" of that ministerial association, of which Hanna's pastor was the "Scribe" or secretary. It appears that Hanna was formally ordained by a Council of the Connecticut ministers, in 1761, in spite of protests from Rev. Dr. Bellamy who from the first had an unfavorable opinion of him. The next year, as already mentioned, he took up his pastoral labors in Albany; and on October 18, 1763, he was received into the Dutchess County Presbytery. During his ministry of the Albany flock he sustained "an unblemished Moral & Religious Character." On February 14, 1767, Sir William Johnson wrote to Governor Henry Moore, of New York, as follows: "Mr. Hanna, the Dissenting Clergyman at Albany has informed me that as sev.^l of his Congregation, are removed and about to remove to other places which must reduce his stipend he is therefore desirous to apply himself to the practise of the Law to which end he has earnestly sol-

licitted for my recommendatⁿ to your Excell^{cy} that he may be admitted. I therefore take the Liberty of laying his request before y^r Excell^{cy}" On May 29, 1767, Hanna wrote to Johnson and thanked him for his "many Favours," and "particularly your last Letter to the Governor in my Favour which was of Singular Service to me." This letter Hanna wrote from Schenectady, and he added: "Since my return from your House, I have attended close to Mr. [Peter] Silvesters Office, to acquaint myself with the Formalities & proceedings of the Court; have got my Licence, & qualified last Tuesday [May 26]: am come to Schenectady, with a Design to settle; & should be glad to have it in my Power to serve you or any of your Friends." Hanna's assumption of legal duties collided with his ministerial status, and a committee of the Presbyterian Church of Albany, on July 9, 1767, requested the Dutchess County Presbytery to grant "a Dismission from the Reverend Mr. William Hanna which We are the Moore Incouraged to hope for, as he has promised unanimously to concur with us in the same Request."¹ It is from this petition to Presbytery that we learn "that the Rev^d. William Hanna was regularly appointed to the Pastoral Care of this flock: that he performed the Ministerial Functions for the Space of about five years amongst us." Released from pastoral cares, Hanna now practised law at Schenectady. Apparently, he soon tired of the law, for, in the spring of 1771, he expressed to Johnson "an ardent desire to take Orders in the Church of England and become a Missionary." Johnson recommended him to Rev. Dr. Samuel Auchmuty, who advised, as an alternative, that Hanna be recommended to Lord Baltimore, because of the opposition around Albany that had arisen against Hanna "from his old Friends the Dissenters." Auchmuty also wrote: "His moral character formerly was very good; but since he has commenced Lawyer it is altered." Per-

¹This was signed by Elders "John McCrea, John Munro, Robt. Henry."

haps there was more of rumor than of fact in this charge. In a letter to Johnson, of May 8, 1771, Hanna complains that "altho' the Presbyterians were loud in my Praise when I officiated as a Clergiman amongst them, yet I could find that immediately on my leaving them they were as loud in Slander." Johnson gave Hanna a "commendatory Letter" to Governor Horatio Sharpe, of Maryland, who received him hospitably. Sharpe gave him friendly letters to Virginia, to Lord Fairfax, George Washington and others, and he readily got a vacant parish. In 1772, Hanna was in London, where he received from the Bishop of London deacon's and priest's orders in June. Upon his return to America, we find him in Maryland hunting for a parish.¹

The first house of worship of the Albany Presbyterians was built on what was known as "gallows hill," on a plot bounded on the east by William Street, on the north by Beaver Street, on the west by Grand Street, and on the south by Hudson Avenue. Its size was convenient and it fronted to the east. It had a tall steeple, and it cost about £2813 York currency. But in 1770 there was yet unpaid of this sum £2001, 18s., 6d., to be paid by three persons, and of which Elder Robert Henry had advanced out of his own pocket £1086, 13s., 6d. The original trustees of 1763 are given as John Macomb, David Edgar, Samuel Holladay, Robert Henry, Abraham Lyle, and John Monro; and the elders, Robert Henry, David Edgar, and Matthew Watson.²

For some two years after the removal of Mr. Hanna the church here was without a regular pastor, but the Synod provided occasional supplies. In 1768, Andrew Bay, "a broad Scotchman,"³ but judged to be a "a highly talented and eloquent preacher," made a preaching tour

¹*MSS. of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 14, pp. 48, 195; vol. 20, pp. 192, 194, 207, 209, 217, 236; vol. 21, pp. 20, 21, 225; vol. 22, p. 146. Printed in part in *Doc. Hist. of N. Y.*, vol. 4 (quarto edition), pp. 236, 278, 279, 281, 296, 307. Cf. also Gillett, vol. 1, pp. 151, 154, 379, 386-388.

²*Presby. Magazine*, 1851, p. 130; Blayney, *History of First Presbyterian Church of Albany* (1877), p. 51; *Records of Presby. Church*, vol. 1, p. 410.

³In *Doc. Hist. of N. Y.*, vol. 4 (quarto edition), p. 241, the editor says he was "a native of Ireland." The above quotation is from Gillett, vol. 1, pp. 386, 387.

of six Sabbaths, by appointment of Synod, among the Scotch settlements in the vicinity of Albany and in what is now Washington and Montgomery Counties. His services attracted the attention of the pastorless Albany flock. On May 17, 1769, Mr. Bay was in attendance at Synod in Philadelphia, as a member of the Newcastle Presbytery. By this Presbytery he had been ordained in 1748, and he had now been over twenty years associated with the Presbyterian church in America. It must have been immediately after his attendance at Synod, in 1769, that he accepted a call from the Albany congregation. He is found again in Philadelphia at the Synod in May, 1770, when the Dutchess County Presbytery was ordered to "call upon Mr. Bay, now residing within their bounds, to produce a regular dismissal from New Castle Presbytery, and to join their Presbytery." Elder Robert Henry had accompanied the pastor to Philadelphia, in order to lay before the Synod the distressed state of the church's finances and indebtedness for its house of worship. The Synod "cheerfully and cordially" recommended them "to the assistance of all well disposed charitable persons within their bounds."¹ Mr. Bay labored in Albany for about five years, or until 1774, when he took a pastorate at Newtown, Long Island, under the jurisdiction of the New York Presbytery. His stay at Newtown was short. His pastoral relations there were dissolved by a judgment handed down by the New York Presbytery, June 20, 1775, from which he appealed to the Synod, which upheld the Presbytery by its order of May 27, 1776. He was much displeased. The Synod's records state: "Mr. Bay, in a solemn manner, declared his declining the jurisdiction of this Synod for the future, and against having any further connection with it."²

From 1774 to 1785, the Presbyterians of Albany were without a regular pastor, but were cared for by

¹*Records of Presby. Church*, vol. 1, p. 410.

²*Ibid.* pp. 475-476.

supplies from time to time. In the records of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, we find this minute under May 22, 1775, viz.:

"A supplication from the Presbyterian Congregation in Albany, praying for supplies, and that some members of the Synod may be sent to visit the country to the northward of the city, and that their congregation may be taken from under the care of the Presbytery of Dutchess and put under the care of the Presbytery of New York, was brought in and read; the said congregation, agreeable to their request, are put under the care of the Presbytery of New York."¹

The first volume of the records of the Presbytery of New York begins with the year 1775, as the first 138 pp. are, unfortunately, torn out. On p. 140, we find the confirmation of the transfer of the Albany church from the Dutchess County Presbytery to the Presbytery of New York.² This entry, although undated, was made shortly before June 20, 1775, and we learn that Mr. Miller was selected to supply at Albany "four Sab^s before our stated fall Presby— And Mr. Treat two Sabb^s before that time." Mr. King was chosen to supply the whole month of September, 1776.³ He must have pleased the Albanians, because the minutes of the Presbytery, of October 8, 1776, show the presentation of "a petition from the Presby. Congregation in the City of Albany for supplies and particularly for Mr. King."⁴ In 1777, Mr. Eckley received appointments for "four Sabbaths between this and our next stated Presby. and as many more as he can. Mr. King all the month of April— Mr. Dodd the month of Feb. and Mr. Joline the month of March."⁵ Dr. Rodgers was desired "to supply the

¹*Records of Presby. Church*, vol. 1, p. 471.

²*MS. Minutes of the Presbytery of New York*, vol. 1, p. 140. The original records are now under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Newark, N. J., and I am indebted for extracts to the kindness of Rev. Julius H. Wolff, the Stated Clerk of that body.

³*Ibid.*, vol. 1 (May 7, 1776), p. 160.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.

Church at Albany, one month or more this summer [1777], if he can possibly spare so much time from more important labours." At the same time Mr. Joline was appointed "to supply one month at Albany—and the remainder at discretion till the fall Presby."¹ We find no further supplies during the war period, but that does not necessarily presage that no services were held.

On the morning of September 2, 1775, there assembled at the Presbyterian church on "gallows hill" a joint conference of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs for the Northern Department, the Committee of the City and County of Albany and Indian delegations of the Six Nations, and then and there the Committee, which was a committee of safety at the outbreak of the American Revolution, answered the Indians in the usual harangue that preceded an Indian treaty.² This was one of the meetings by means of which the Continental Congress sought to win over as allies the Indian tribes for the impending conflict. The war was on. The part played by the Presbyterian element, from New York to Georgia, in that struggle, is conspicuous in the annals of the American Revolution.³ Seventy pounds of lead were taken out of the Albany Presbyterian Church, stripped no doubt from steeple and window frames, to be made into bullets for the patriot firearms. When this first church was being restored, in 1786, we learn that an effort was being made to get back either the weight of lead or its value in money. It appears that the lead had been purchased by Dr. Samuel Stringer for the army, but had never been paid for. Stringer was one of the Commissioners for detecting and defeating Conspiracies in the State of New York, and held other places of high trust in the struggle for independence. I have discovered yet another incident of more than ordinary interest. A memorial was presented by John Price

¹MS. *Minutes of the Presbytery of New York*, May 6, 1777, pp. 169, 170.

²MS. *Minutes of Com. of City and County of Albany*, vol. 1, p. 259; *New York Colonial Docs.*, vol. 8, p. 627.

³Breed. *Presbyterianism and the Revolution*, Phila., [1876]; Briggs, pp. 347-352.

and John M. Beeckman to the legislature of New York, on behalf of themselves and other citizens who were members of the Committee of the City and County of Albany. It recited that the Albany committee had borrowed from the Presbyterian Church of Albany "a large iron stove, with the necessary pipes, grate and supporters . . . for the use of the convention of the representatives of the state, and which was destroyed in the conflagration of Kingston." Now, it is interesting to note that, in days when stoves were a luxury, the Presbyterian stove of the Albany congregation was loaned for service in Kingston, to keep warm the ardor of the band of patriots who framed the first constitution of the state of New York. And it is not unworthy to remark that, when Kingston was sacked in 1777, this stove, warmer of patriotic servants, was itself destroyed by the fervent heat of a British conflagration. The memorial asked the legislature to replace the loss to the church. The Senate had been willing, but the Assembly, on February 10, 1781, referred the matter to a committee and later non-concurred.¹

The Presbytery of New York, on October 21, 1783, appointed Mr. King to supply three Sabbaths at Albany and Schenectady "at his discretion."² At the meeting of May 4, 1784, discretionary appointments for Albany and Schenectady were as follows: Mr. Close and Mr. King, two Sabbaths each, and Mr. Armstrong, "who has been preaching for some time within our bounds to supply the places aforesaid, as much as he conveniently can between this and our next meeting of Presbytery."³ On October 19, 1784, Mr. Burton was appointed "to spend three or four months at Albany, White Creek and the Country round as he shall think proper."⁴

¹*Journal of the Assembly of New York*, 1781. Albany: Reprinted by J. Buel, 1820, pp. 18, 58-59; *MS. Minutes of Com. of City and County of Albany*, Oct. 9, 1776, where origin of loan is shown.

²*MS. Minutes of the Presbytery of New York*, vol. 2, p. 52.

³*Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 69.

After the war, the American Presbyterian Church took on new life and expanded itself from New York to Georgia. The many ministers could no longer meet together in an annual Synod, and a system was devised of representation. In 1788, the General Assembly was organized, composed of four Synods, sixteen Presbyteries, having 177 ministers, 111 probationers, and 419 churches.¹

The legislature of New York, on April 6, 1784, passed an enabling act pertaining to the appointment of trustees by all religious denominations, who were to be the responsible body corporate in each of the respective congregations. Pursuant to the provisions of this act, "The Corporation of the Presbyterian Church in the City of Albany," on October 3, 1785, elected as trustees Robert Henry, Mathew Watson, John W. Wendell, Robert McClellan, Hunlock Woodruff, Daniel McIntire, James Boyd, John Robison and Theodorus Van Wyck Graham.² At a meeting of the corporation, held a few days later (October 7), Peter Sharp was chosen treasurer and Joseph Caldwell was named Clerk to the board of trustees for a year's term. At this first meeting of the revived Presbyterian body of Albany, Robert Henry acted as moderator.³

On August 10, 1785, the Presbytery of New York received two calls for the Rev. John McDonald as pastor—one from the English Presbyterians in Albany, and the other from a Presbyterian body at New Perth, Washington County. Rev. Dr. Rodgers was authorized to transmit these calls to Mr. McDonald for his consideration, and to answer the letters of the two congregations, informing them of the action of Presbytery in the matter. As Presbytery anticipated the acceptance of one of these calls, they appointed Mr. McDonald to prepare a sermon from Rom. 8:1 and an exegesis on the question "Nunquid discriminis sit inter commune et specialem gratiam?",

¹Briggs, pp. 362, ff.

²MS. *Clerk's Book*, in the possession of the First Presbyterian Church.

³MS. *Clerk's Book*.

both to be delivered at the next Presbytery.¹ At the meeting of October 18, Dr. Rodgers reported his fulfilment of his duties. The Hon. John Williams appeared in behalf of the New Perth congregation, and John W. Wendell and James Boyd were present as commissioners from Albany, "who gave the Presbytery every information they required about their respective Churches & Congregations. The Presbytery then called upon Mr. McDonald to know if he had considered these calls & was ready to give an answer. Mr. McDonald replied he had frequently & seriously considered them, & had come to a fixed resolution of accepting the call from Albany, & with the leave of the Presbytery, accordingly did accept of it. Upon which the commissioners from Albany requested that Presbytery would proceed to ordain Mr. McDonald with all convenient speed & that if possible, the ordination be in Albany. The Presbytery proceeded to consider Mr. McDonald's sermon preached at the opening of Presbytery from the text assigned him at last meeting, & also his exegesis were delivered, & accepted them as parts of his trial—Having proceeded to examine him on his experimental acquaintance with religion & views in entering into the work of the Gospel ministry, were unanimously satisfied."² Two days later, on October 20, the Presbytery "proceeded to examine Mr. McDonald upon Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Geography, Logic, Rhetoric, Natural Philosophy, Astronomy, Moral Philosophy, Church History, Systematic & Casuistic Divinity & Church Government, his answers in all which were sustained & accepted as parts of trial. Mr. McDonald adopted the Westminster confession of Faith as the confession of his faith, & declared his approbation of the Directory for Presbyterian church government, worship & discipline. The Presbytery after considering the request of the commissioners that Mr. McDonald should be ordained with all convenient speed, & also that

¹*MS. Minutes of the Presbytery of New York*, vol. 2, p. 93.

²*MS. Minutes of the Presbytery of New York*, vol. 2, pp. 97. ff.

it may greatly subserve the interest of the Redeemers Kingdom in that part of the world that he be ordained in Albany, agreed to appoint & accordingly appointed him to be ordained in the church of Albany upon the 8th day of November at 10 O'clock A. M. Mr. Close to preach the ordination sermon, Mr. Ker to preside & Mr. Chapman to give the charge to the people."¹

The acceptance of Mr. McDonald and report of the proceedings of Presbytery were communicated by Mr. Wendell at a meeting of the trustees of the corporation, held on November 1, 1785. The trustees forthwith made provision for a "Public Dinner" to be given to the three clergymen whom Presbytery had selected to participate in Mr. McDonald's ordination, and also arranged for the payment of "all Necessary expences of those Gentlemen."²

On November 8, the Presbytery met at Albany "according to adjournment P. P. S." There were present, "The Moderator, Mr. Close, Mr. Chapman, Mr. Miller, Mr. King, & Mr. Wilson, Ministers—Mr. Schenck, a member of the first Presby. of Philadelphia being present was asked & sat as a correspondent—Mr. Ker being necessarily absent by sickness, the Presby. requested Mr. Miller to preside in his room—Mr. Close preached the ordination sermon from I Tim. 5, 17, after which the Presby. proceeded to the ordination of Mr. McDonald by fasting, prayer & the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, giving him also the right hand of fellowship, & installed him pastor of the Presbyterian church in Albany. Mr. Chapman gave the charge to the people. Mr. McDonald then took his seat as a member of the Presbytery."³

The church was now prepared to enter upon its new career. The pews of the church were, on November 10th

¹*MS. Minutes of the Presbytery of New York*, vol. 2, pp. 97, ff.

²*MS. Clerk's Book*, of the trustees.

³*MS. Minutes of the Presbytery of New York*, vol. 2, pp. 103, ff. It has been thought best to give the minutes with as little curtailment as possible, even at the expense of verbosity, and with a realization that they are far removed from a literary structure.

ordered to be numbered at once, and on the 14th it was resolved to "proceed to the Renting of the Pews on Thursday the fifteenth day of December to Such Persons as are on the Subscription list for the Support of the Minister." Should two or more persons select the same seat, choice was to be determined by ballot, and in case of non-payment, after demand, rights were to be forfeited. This system of selection was rescinded on December 15, and the pews were disposed of by public vendue on that day. There were sixty-four pews, and the Clerk's manuscript record-book gives the names of the original purchasers. The "first Seat on the Right hand going in the chief Door of the Church" was "Appropriated to the Use of the Corporation of this City" (seat No. 12), and the seat opposite (No. 13) to the Governor of the State. The pew next to the pulpit on the right (No. 24) was reserved for the Minister, and on the left for the elders and deacons.¹

On November 23, 1785, the corporation, at a meeting held "at Mr. Denniston's Tavern," appointed a committee "to prepare a Subscription list, and to tender it to Such Gentlemen of the Town, as they conceive Proper, who are not members of this Church." The clerk was authorized "to take three Shillings for making Publication of Marriage, and Sixpence for every Persons Christened." The price set for "Burying a Person under the Church" was "Three Pounds for an Adult, and thirty Shillings for a Person under fourteen years." At this meeting John Bull (not the original English John Bull) was chosen clerk for one year, at five pounds per annum, to be paid quarterly. Mr. Bull was also given pew number thirty-one, gratis, for the year, but he was dismissed from his office on January 11, following. They next engaged Gregory Grant as sexton "during the Winter Season," at three shillings per Sabbath. His duties were prescribed as follows:

¹*MS. Clerk's Book*, of the trustees.

"1 See that the Doors and Window Shutters of the Church are Seasonably opened.

"2 See that the fires be made in the Stoves, in the Season thereof, and the Snow Cleared to the doors of the Church.

"3 See that the Stoves be Removed the first day of may and Return them, the first day of November.

"4 See that Children and Servants behave with Decorum during Service.

"5 Endeavour upon approach of Strangers, to conduct them to Seats. Attend Funerals in the Congregation for which a Perquisite of [*blank*] be taken by him.

"6 Keep the Corporation Seat for them, and Such Persons as they introduce. [*No seventh rule.*] 8^{thly} Close the Church."

Other resolutions passed at this meeting were:

"Resolved that the Sex[t]on apply Occationally to the Treasurer for money, for purchaseing wood for the Stoves, for the Sawing thereof, and the Treasurer is hereby directed to pay the Same.

"Resolved, that the Side doors of the Church be kept Shut untill Servise is done, in the fore and Afternoon, in order to keep the Church warm during the Winter Season."¹

The Patroon, Stephen Van Rensselaer, was given the choice of a pew. He chose number four, which was "accordingly assigned for his use, he having the Liberty to make what Improvements on the said Pew he chuses."²

The trustees claimed that they were the sole dispensers of the monies belonging to and collected in the church, under the legislative act relative to religious corporations. This was, of course, their indisputable right, but the vote on the question was not unanimous among their own number, and the Session also dissented. The trustees proposed as a compromise that the elders

¹*MS. Clerk's Book.*

²*Ibid.*, Dec. 7, 1785.

and deacons take up the collections in the church and deposit them in the treasury of the corporation, but the Session "could not agree With the Proposals of the Trustees."¹

Rev. Mr. McDonald, the pastor, at the request of the Session, on April 5, 1786, laid before the trustees a proposition for erecting a school under the direction of the church. After deliberation, the trustees recommended delay, because they had been informed officially that the city "was pushing a Subscription for the erecting an Academy."

In June, 1786, arrangements were begun for repairs to the church edifice. Trustees Henry and Watson were constituted a committee to wait upon Philip Van Rensselaer" to enquire respecting the Lead taken out of the Church for the use of the Army & to demand a return of the same." They conferred with Van Rensselaer, who promised to apply to the governor in the matter. They also made inquiry of John Fulsom, a pewholder, whether he would be willing to "warn to Funerals, walk before the Corps and to have the Perquisits allowed for the Same." He accepted the office, at an honorarium of twelve shillings. The charges for use of bier and funeral cloth were fixed at six shillings for grown persons and two shillings for children. The sexton was allowed six shillings for digging graves for adults and four shillings for children.

The repairs undertaken, in 1786, were quite extensive and included one hundred panes of glass, painting of all sashes, repair of stoves, purchase of a bell, funeral bier and cloth, restoring doors, four supporters for the steeple, etc. The records show that at this time Robert Henry, a trustee, had advanced out of his private possessions the sum of £3256, 19d., 3 farthings.

On January 31, 1787, the trustees adopted a church seal, "a Dove descending with an Olive Branch in its mouth," inscribed "Presbyterian Church Albany," and this seal was put in the custody of the clerk of the board.

¹*MS. Clerk's Book, Jan. 27, 1786.*

This seal is yet under the care of the present clerk. It is interesting to mention that this metal seal was made by Stephen A. Hopkins, not of course a relation of the present pastor of this church, who charged £1, 4s. for it.

The bell, for the steeple, which had been bought in 1787 from David Ross, a bell-founder in New Jersey, was unsatisfactory, and the trustees notified him that he "must expect to have it returned on his hands as it is not agreeable to his contract." Accordingly, the bell went back to David Ross, but the new casting caused likewise "general dissatisfaction in the Congregation" and the bell was once more (May, 1789) consigned to Mr. Storm, of New York, the church's agent in the transaction. It weighed 690 pounds. In March, 1790, they made inquiries about the cost of a bell of 600 pounds from Doolittle, of New Haven, Connecticut. In August, 1791, they informed Doolittle that the bell he had furnished was cracked and useless. He agreed to recast it, and back it was sent.

On January 4, 1790, the trustees "Resolved that one thousand Coppers be stamped with the impression of (Church Penny) to be placed in the hands of the treasurer for the purpose of Exchanging to the congregation at the rate of twelve for a Shilling, in order to add respect to the weekly collections." Specimens of this impression of the church money now command high prices and are diligently sought after for the cabinets of numismatists.

In March, 1790, application was made to the corporation of the city of Albany for a burying ground. The common council, on March 6, granted "five acres of Ground comprised in the following Bounderies," "on the North by Princess Street on the East by Duke Street on the South by Predeaux Street and on the West by the Lot in which a vault has latly been constructed." granting the same to the Dutch, Episcopal, Lutheran and Presbyterian churches. The Presbyterian allotment was the easternmost, consisting of one and one-sixth

acres. Title was taken on April 16. In April of the following year (1791) members of the congregation set to work in leveling the burying ground.

In the late winter of 1792, negotiations were set on foot for the purchase of a new lot for the erection of a new house of worship. This lot was on what was known as "the plains" on the "east of Washington street" (now South Pearl.) In July, 1793, James Bloodgood was desired to draw up plans for the new church. Subscriptions were taken up. In August it was determined that "the proposed New brick Church" should be sixty-four feet in length and sixty-two feet in breadth, exclusive of the steeple. An estimate was asked of Mr. Packard, a builder. In December provision was made for contracting for 300,000 bricks. A committee on ways and means was appointed on January 15, 1794. At the end of March, the following advertisement was placed in Webster's Albany newspaper:

"Proposals for building a brick Presbyterian Church in this City, for which a grate part of the meterials are already procured, any person wishing to undertake is desired to deliver in their terms by the first day of May next and by applying to Mr. James Bloodgood may see the plan and be informed of the Quant[it]y of meterials Already ingaged for the purpose."¹

On April 4, 1794, Bloodgood reported and produced a plan for the new church, which was accepted unanimously. By midsummer the work on the foundations was well forward. The trustees planned for raising subscriptions for the project and for raising the salary of their pastor. On August 18, Mr. McDonald's salary was raised from £230 to £300 per annum. Nine members and the pastor by a written instrument of December 11, 1794, agreed each to loan £200 for the completion of the church. The trustees accepted the offer at their meeting on January 9, 1795, and arranged for repayment out of the pew-rents, after the new structure would be

¹This text is taken from the *MS. Clerk's Book*, of the trustees.

occupied. At this time, as shown by the sworn deposition of the board, the entire annual revenues and income of the church amounted to about £1200.

Through publication of advertisements in the newspapers, proposals were solicited for building the church. At a meeting of the trustees, February 17, 1795, several proposals were opened. All of these bids were incomplete and "further Consideration was deferred until more particular information be received." On March 4, according to invitation, Elisha Putnam of Lansingburgh met with the trustees and laid before them the following proposition, viz:

"To Compleat the out side of the Meeting hous including laying the lower flowrs, that is to rais the Walls, Tower, Spire, Doars, Frontises, Window frames, Sashes, Glass, Glazing & painting all the wood woork with two Coats, except spire with three coats. The above work I will ingage to perform finding all the materials for the sum of three thousand and one Hundred pounds." Mr. Putnam named two persons as his security for carrying out the contract. After some alterations had been made in the plans, the trustees settled upon the following specifications, on March 17, 1795, viz:

"A Description of a Church to be built on the foundation laid in the third Ward of the City of Albany for the Corporation of the Presbyterian Congr[eg]ation by Mr. Elisha Putnam.

"Said Church is to be built of nine inch brick, seventy six feet long, and sixty three feet six inches broad, the walls to be twenty eight feet high from the watter tables to the plates, the lenght [*sic*] of two brick and a half thick to the Galerys and the lenght [*sic*] of two brick thick upwards, with a tower sixty feet high, finished with a cornish, & eighteen feet squair three lenghts [*sic*] of a brick thick projecting four feet from the boddy of the Church. A stepl to be ninety feet high from the top of the tower proportioned in sercum-

ferance according to the squair of the tower and is to be composed of two octagen sections with balls or urns on each squair, a semi section and spire with a Copper ball two feet six inches in diameter to be well painted and gilt with gold leaf with a neet scrole and vain all according to a drauft and skale now in the posession of the board of Trustees.

“The building to have neet double Jet cornish to be continued round with a pitched pediment in frunt of the tower, the Gabel and cornished singel, and thirty one windows containing twenty four lights each eleven by fourteen inch glass, One ovel window in frunt of the tower and a sounding window with vernicion blindes in each squair of the tower and four square windows with round tops in the lower section of the stepel, the second section to have eight and the semi section to have four paintings in imitation of sashes and glass as represented in the drauft above refered to, the window fraims to be boxed for but without waits.—The building to have three out side and one inside dore eight pannels each, the two tower dores to be made with two leaves each three dorres frontices with palasters, the out side dores to be finished with proportioned Collums and pitched or raked pediments over dore frunted with a stoop to each dore composed of suteable timber and plank, with a sizabel circular platform and an easy flight of steps.

“The roof of the building to be framed with nine pairs principals to be secured with iron stirrip, bolts and screws wherever they are represented in a draft now in the hands of the board of trustees. The Shingles of the roof to be painted with two coats spanish brown, the stepel painted with three coats white lead, the cornishes dores window Sashes & frames and frontices with two coats white lead, the flooring to be framed with Sills fourteen by ten inch to be ten feet distant from each other, with a sufficient quantity of sizable Joice, The gallarys framed with frunt beems twelve by ten in thick with Joice framed in wall plates worked in the wall and

well braised to prevent spreading,—The lower floor to be laid with pitch pine plank grooved and matched.”¹

At the same meeting at which these specifications were recorded, articles of agreement were entered into with the builder, Elisha Putnam, involving an outlay for construction of £3250, to be paid by instalments. In May, the board began to call for part of the loans which, in the previous year, had been offered, as already stated. The need of more funds was imperative. On May 27, the trustees “Resolved that the Rev^d John McDonald be requested to go to N. York and such other places as he shall think most advisable to solicit contributions for compleating our present under taking.” The long parchment subscription list of May, 1795, circulated under this resolution, is yet preserved carefully by this church, and is doubly interesting because it bears the autograph signatures of Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Alexander Hosack, Brockholst Livingston, Gerard Bancker, Hugh Gaîne, Gabriel Furman, and other celebrities in state-craft, science and letters. At a subsequent meeting (June 8) Jacob Wright was requested to accompany the minister to New York and other places to garner in assistance, and Trustees Eights, Woodruff and Webster were constituted a building committee. The name of Charles R. Webster, “father of printing” in Albany, deserves more than passing notice.

The minister went on his mission and, meanwhile, the Rev. Walter Monteith acted as a supply.² Soon after Mr. McDonald’s return, namely, on September 11, 1795, the Session placed their pastor under charges before the Albany Presbytery on account of “reports apparently too well grounded, tending to criminate the Rev^d. John McDonald’s moral character.” Thus, amidst the difficulties attending large building operations, accompanied by great financial obligations, the church now suffered in its very vital spiritual relations. The

¹*MS. Clerk’s Book.*

²*MS. Clerk’s Book, January 27 and April 6, 1796.*

records of the Session reflect the sorrow of the congregation. The Session sought the advice and direction of Presbytery "in the present difficult and trying circumstances." The relations of Mr. McDonald with the Albany Presbytery were dissolved, but recommendation was made to the church "to receive Mr. McDonald [as a member], upon proper application, after public confession."¹ In January 1796, we find the trustees engaged in settling accounts with him.² He continued, however, to preach in Albany, after being deposed, for a number of years, gathered about him his adherents, and formed what is now the United Presbyterian Church. He died in September, 1821.³

On February 7, 1796, a contract was made for finishing the interior of the new church, amounting to £963, New York currency.

Governor George Clinton had presented a lot of ground on Main Street, in Lansingburgh, to the church, and the trustees ordered that it be disposed of at "Public Sale" on or before the second Tuesday of February, 1797, to provide funds for the new church. It was sold for £50. Disagreement arose with the builder, Elisha Putnam, over the two contracts that had been entered into with him. They agreed, on November 18 and 24, 1797, to submit their differences to two arbitrators. Arrangements were made for locating, numbering and disposing of seats. Pew number 122 was reserved for the minister's family, and number 62 for the sexton. Apparently there were all told 122 pews on the main floor. The annual rental varied from \$4. to \$10.50 per year for pews in the body of the church, and \$3. to \$7. for front seats in the gallery. The pew committee, on January 27, 1797, reported the amount obtained at public

¹*M.S. Session Records*, vol. 1, pp. 1, 2, 16.

²*M.S. Clerk's Book*.

³Blayney. *First Presbyterian Church*, (1877), p. 20. The reasons for which McDonald was deposed from the ministry are given in the history of the Albany Presbytery, in *Journal of Presby. Hist. Society*, vol. 3, pp. 228, 231-232. The Presbytery of Albany was erected by the Synod of New York and New Jersey, on October 8, 1790. *Ibid*, p. 224.

sale for pews to be \$8398.75, and assured annual income therefrom as \$525.50.¹

This second house of worship was located at what is to-day South Pearl and Beaver Streets. In 1831 it was considerably enlarged, remodelled and improved, and was described in a newspaper of that day as "the most elegantly finished church in the city."² After the occupation of the third edifice, the second building was sold to the Congregationalists. Subsequently, used for business purposes, it was known as "Beaver Block,"³ and what remains is to-day part of a theatre.

About August, 1796, the trustees and Session were negotiating with David S. Bogart to be their pastor. On February 17, 1797, the trustees made further provision to signalize the Presbytery for "prosecuting the Call" of Mr. Bogart as pastor.⁴ He seems to have been in service before the middle of March, when an account of his was ordered paid by the board. On July 29, the trustees deliberated about "the propriety of raising the salary of the Rev^d. David S. Bogart," and suggested a compromise. He seems not to have been satisfied, for, on September 11, 1797, the Albany Presbytery, at his own solicitation, dismissed him from Presbytery and dissolved his connection with the Albany congregation.⁵ In June, he had requested a vacation "for a few weeks in hopes of recovering his health," by taking "a Journey to the Southward."⁶ Apparently, on account of ill-health and the financial difficulties in the congregation, he had concluded to go back to Southampton, L. I., from whence he had come to Albany.⁷

At this period, the congregation often listened to sermons of Dr. John Blair Smith, first president of Union College (1795). It was he who preached at the opening of their second house of worship. It was he

¹*MS. Clerk's Book.*

²Munsell. *Annals of Albany*, vol. 9, p. 230.

³Blayney, pp. 54-55.

⁴Bogart was a licentate of the Reformed Dutch Synod, but was taken under the care of the Albany Presbytery.—*Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, vol. 3, p. 229.

⁵*MS. Clerk's Book.*

⁶*MS. Session Records*, vol. 1, p. 24.

⁷Blayney, pp. 20-21.

who brought about the pastorate of Eliphalet Nott—a pastorate begun on October 3, 1798, and terminated in August, 1804, when Dr. Nott was inducted as the third president of Union College. It was in this year (1804) that Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, who had attended services in the First Church, fought the duel which robbed Hamilton of his life, and the nation of one of its greatest master-minds. Dr. Nott preached a funeral eulogy—a sermon against duelling—which obtained wide celebrity.¹

The immediate successors of Dr. Nott were: John B. Romeyn, from December 5, 1804, till November, 1808; and William Neill, from September 14, 1809, till August 20, 1816. These three former pastors of this church were Moderators of the General Assembly of the denomination—Dr. Romeyn in 1810, Dr. Nott in 1811, and Dr. Neill in 1815. During the pastorate of Dr. Neill, the Second Presbyterian Church was organized (1813) and it was he who preached the dedicatory sermon. The Third Presbyterian Church was organized in 1817, and the Fourth Church in 1829. Albany now had four Presbyterian congregations, whilst New York City had nineteen.

Extension of the national and religious life was assured by the termination of the second war with Great Britain and the inception of a reign of peace. That war also terminated the formative period of Presbyterianism in Albany.

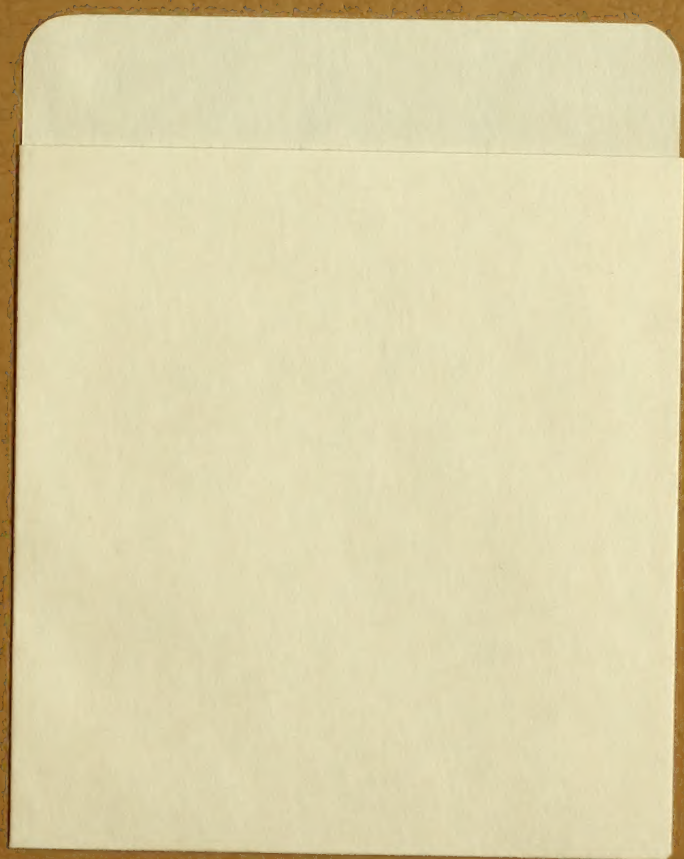
We have elaborated the temporalities of the beginnings of the Presbyterian church in Albany, because written records and printed sources deal largely with this aspect. The spiritual forces are hidden; are written in the hearts of men and women; are expressed in the deeds that "speak louder than words"; for "by their fruits ye shall know them." The contributions of the Presbyterian church to the civic and religious life of Albany were honorable and important.

¹*Blayney*, pp. 22, 23.

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